AN EPISTLE TO FRIENDS

Concerning the Preſent and Succeeding

TIMES.

Being a Faithful Exhortation and Warning to all Friends, who Profeſs the Truth, to beware of the manifold Wiles of the Enemy, and to ſtand Armed in the Light of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, (againſt his Aſſaults) that ſo they may be ready to Anſwer the Call and Requirings of the Lord.

Alſo, ſomething ſignified of the Miſery of the Succeeding Times, that all may be Prepared, and that the Evil Day may not overtake any unawares, but ſuch as turn away their Ear from Counſel.

By one who is a Traveller in the way of Peace, and hath Good will towards all Men, and more eſpecially to the Houſhold of Faith, STEPHEN CRISP.

Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit ſaith to the Churches.

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A

EPISTLE

TO

FRIENDS

Concerning the Present and Succeeding

TIMES.

An Epiſtle to Friends, concerning the Preſent and Succeeding Times.

Dear Friends,

YOU whom the Lord hath reached unto in this the Day of his Love, and hath made known the way of Truth and Righteouſneſs unto you, through the raiſing up of that Holy Living Witneſs of himſelf, that long lay hid and buried in you, and hath brought you to a ſecret feeling of ſomething in you, that is worth the minding and regarding; and the Lord cauſing this to Appear in the Day of your ſeeking, as a Light, diſcovering Darkneſs, and its Power, by which ye were formerly holden, and given you by his Spirit a ſenſe and ſecret Hope, that in this Light, the way of Deliverance was to be attained unto; this Hope made you not aſhamed of the Light which before you hated, but you came to know and embrace it, even while others ſtill hated it, and you for its ſake; yet your Hearts being affected with the Hope that did appear therein, could not but joyn unto it, as to make publick Profeſſion of

it for its own ſake; and for no other ends or deſigns, or intereſt at all, but with reſolution in that Light, to wait for the Salvation of God. Dear Friends, it is you aforementioned that both now, and for ſome Days and Weeks my Heart hath been deeply exerciſed concerning, even Night and Day; and the aboundings of the Fathers Love doth often overcome me, and draws me forth now to ſay and write theſe things unto you for your Admonition and Eſtabliſhment; and indeed it is you who did thus rightly own the way of Truth, and knew your Believing to be the Gift and Mercy of God to your Souls, that I do aim at; for thoſe that have taken up the Profeſſion of the Precious Truth upon by-reſpects and ſiniſter ends, and but for Reaſons propounded in their Carnal Minds; tho' I do pity them, yet I have not much at this time to ſay to them but this, *The Day ſhall declare them, and their Garments ſhall not hide them.*

But you, Oh my Friends! who had Fellowſhip with us, in the deep Travels of our Beginnings, and did come to Truth the ſame way, and have known the Power and Vertue of it, many times overcoming you in your Inward Man, which hath made you cry out, *Lord, evermore give us of this Bread*; and hath made you as a watred Garden: Oh Friends! how ſhall I expreſs or ſignifie unto you thoſe Long-

Longings, thoſe ardent Deſires and earneſt Breathings of my Soul, that you, even you, might abide to the end of all Trials and Tribulations, Adverſities, and might inherit that Crown of Immortality that is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, and might not by any means be bereft thereof; this is ſingly my Travel in body and Spirit, that you might be kept and preſerved out of all the ſubtil Snares of the wicked One, which hunts for the Soul, even of thoſe that have Believed; and therefore in dear and tender Love, I have a few things to write unto you for the clearing of my Conſcience, and diſcharging my Duty in the ſight of the Lord; and the Lord give you all a tender and an underſtanding Heart, that both you and I may yet have cauſe Daily to Praiſe the Lord in the glorious Light of his Salvation, which he hath manifeſted among us by the Revealing his Son Jeſus Chriſt, to whom belongs *Dominion, Honour and Glory for Ever, Amen.*

And firſt, Dear Friends, it is in my Heart to put you in remembrance of that by which we were called and Convinced, which as a Foundation Principle was laid in and among you, and it being unchangeable and unalterable in it ſelf, doth therefore admit of no alteration or change in thoſe that are rightly kept to it.

It was a Light which aroſe in our Hearts, and ſhined forth from God, the Father of Lights, carrying in its Appearance the Nature and Property of God, both in its Condemning Evil, which the Enemy had Sown or Planted in us; and owning, allowing, and juſtifying every thing that was good and honeſt, juſt and equal; even thoſe Thoughts in our Hearts which were of turning towards the Lord, and ſeeking his Righteouſneſs; theſe Thoughts were juſtified and encouraged by the Light, and all the contrary diſcovered and judged, as they were brought to it to be tryed. Now this Light did our Souls Rejoyce in, as they had good cauſe, tho' it took away our former Rejoycings; our Pleaſures in Vanities and Iniquity died, our Glory in this World withered, our Friendſhip with the Sons of Men decayed, and we ſtood in the Light and ſaw all theſe things, and were not ſorry at it, but waited daily to ſee theſe things more and more brought to paſs; neither was there a permitting our Thoughts to go out, how we might prevent thoſe Damages, or repair theſe Loſſes, but the Croſs of Chriſt was indeed our Glorying or Rejoycing; and the Hope that was before us, did make us deſpiſe the Pleaſures, Treaſures and Honours, Friendſhip and Delights of this World; and in thoſe Days you grew into a feeling of the Heavenly

Joy,

Joy, where the Hundred-fold was witneſſed in your Boſoms, and the Zeal of the Lord was kindled by his own Spirit in you, againſt whatſoever this Light of Jeſus in the Conſcience did witneſs againſt; and the Lord beheld your Integrity, and Bleſſed you, and Multiplied you, and added to your Strength and Stature, and then did the Fruits of this Glorious Work abound among you, in three more general and ſpecial Effects; by which effects, or by their continuance among you, let all now come to ſearch and try themſelves, that ſo, Dear Friends, thoſe that have continued Faithful in them all, may perſevere in like manner to the End: And thoſe, who upon true ſearch do find, that they have failed, and fall'n ſhort in all or any of them, may make haſt to Repent, and to turn to that which was the Root of them all, that they may not be found as Fruitleſs and Withered Branches, in the Day that cometh, leſt they be cut off, and utterly Conſumed, and blotted out from among the Living Branches of the Vine; for a Day cometh that Truth will look into the Fig-Tree for Fruit, and Leaves will not defend it from the Curſe and Blaſting.

The three eſpecial Fruits that did ſpring forth from this Bleſſed Root, and were and are to continue and increaſe in us and among us to the end, are theſe.

1. *Purity*,

1. *Purity*, manifeſted in a Godly Converſation.

2. *Unity*, manifeſted in dear and tender Love one towards another.

3. *Faithfulneſs*, manifeſted in bearing a conſtant and faithful Teſtimony to the thing we had received and believed, though it were unto great Loſs and Sufferings.

And againſt all theſe doth the wicked one Appear, to ſee if he can make you Barren concerning them, and that with divers Wiles and Subtilties, that he may prevail on you, and not be known to be the Enemy, but might ſo overcome you, as that you might both ſubmit to him, and then plead for him and his Snares and Wiles, as being Juſt, Right, Lawful, Prudent, Convenient, *&c.* But, Oh Dear Friends, let all be watchful and diligent to wait in the ſenſe and true feeling of that Seed that never fell nor was beguiled; and you will (even the leaſt of you) ſee and comprehend his Workings and Transformings, and be delivered from them.

1. *Purity* and *Holineſs* was a Fruit in you, which doth yet flouriſh in many (bleſſed be the Lord) who are as watchful and careful to approve themſelves in obedience to the Light of Truth in their Inward Parts, as Ever, and find as great a neceſſity both of trying and judging with its Judgment as Ever; theſe having

ving thus walted, have renewed their Strengh unto this very Day, and do mount up as upon the Wings of an Eagle; theſe are neither Weary in Running, nor Faint they in their Walking; But alas! Friends, even theſe do know with how great and manifold Aſſaults they have been Aſſaulted, and known and ſee with Sorrow of Heart, how the Aſſault hath prevailed upon ſome, by working into the Mind a ſecret Liberty, and ſuppoſed Enlargedneſs, whereby a Careleſneſs hath entred ſome, and they having no Keeper, but the Meaſure of Light revealed in their Hearts and Conſciences, ſo ſoon as they came to be perſuaded to ſlight the Reproofs of that, they ſoon erred; and this ſuppoſed Liberty entred, *That now, after ſo many Years Strictneſs and Circumſpection, they ſhould not need now to ſtand ſo ſtrictly to try Things and Words as at Firſt, becauſe now a Day of more Liberty was come*; and this Liberty ſecretly prevailed againſt that pure fear that once was placed in their Hearts, and againſt the very obedience of Truth, Inwardly in the ſubjection of the Mind, and then it became manifeſt Outwardly; the Actions ſometimes Blame-worthy, the Words and Speech again Corrupted, and run into the old Channel of the World, like them again, and the Single Pure Language, learned in the Light, in the time of their Poverty and Simplicity,

plicity, almoſt loſt and forgotten, and ſo the work of God which he wrought, in a manner laid waſte; and then, when this Liberty is entred, and made uſe of, as aforeſaid, oftentimes a ſecret ſubtilty ariſeth againſt the judgment of Truth, either from within, or from any outwardly, that are grieved with this looſe and careleſs kind of Speaking or Acting, which ſubtilty leads to contend for it, againſt the Judgment, telling the Creature, *Why theſe things are but ſmall things, and little things, and what, we muſt not ſtrain at a Gnat, and ſuch like.* Oh my Friends! beware of theſe evil Suggeſtions of the wicked one: How came they to be ſmall and little things, ſeeing they were great things with us in the beginning? And how comes an offence in this Nature to be light now, ſeeing it was heavy in the beginning? Oh let not the greateſt Mercies of our God ſo fill us, as to make us ſlight or forget the leaſt obedience, but rather let the continuance of his Mercy the more quicken you up unto a Zeal for his Name and Truth in all things, to be found doing and ſpeaking according to the Rule of Righteouſneſs, which ye learned in the Light, in the Day of your being low and little, and then nothing will riſe up and be exalted in the Multitude of God's Mercies, but that Holy Birth which lives in Purity when it is at higheſt;

eſt; and ſo that Life of Righteouſneſs will ſhine forth more and more, which Glorifies God and ſeeks his Honour. Dear Friends, that ye might be kept ſo unto the end, is the Breathing and Travel of my Soul: And that where this Neglect hath entred, and this aforeſaid Corruption either in Speech or Action is to be found, that ye would receive the Word of Exhortaton in Meekneſs and Fear, in which it was written unto you, and may redeem the time, for the Days are and ſhall be Evil, and none will hold the Myſtery of the Faith (that ſaves from falling in the Evil Day) but ſuch as do keep the Pure and Undefiled Conſcience, which none can do but by perſiſting and continuing in the Daily Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief and Obedience of the Truth.

A ſecond Fruit that was brought forth from this good Root, was *Unity* and *Love* one towards another; which Bleſſed be the Lord, is preciouſly preſerved in and among many to this very Day; who are ſo ſenſible of the divers operations of Truth in them, to be all by one Spirit, that they are ſtill kept of one Heart and Mind, given up freely to ſerve the Lord in ſingleneſs of Heart in their Generation; and are in this good work as Strengthners and Encouragers of one another; but notwithſtanding the Enemy hath been exceeding

ing buſie to lay waſte and deſtroy this bleſſed effect alſo, and that under divers Pretences, which the Lord ſtill diſcovered by his own Light and Spirit in his People, who have ſingly waited upon him; but many have been his Wiles, ſometimes fitting and preparing Veſſels to riſe up in the Fleſhly and Senſual Wiſdom, and to Traduce and bring in Corrupt and Evil Doctrines, to try who were not found in the Faith, that they may draw them aſide, into a Heat and Zeal for ſomething which had not its Root in the Truth, and which they that abode in the Truth could not own, but Judge and Condemn in the Name of the Lord; which when ſuch ſaw, they took thereat occaſion of ſtriving to Propagate and Promote that which they ſaw withſtood; ſo having loſt Subjection to the Spirit of Truth in themſelves, which would have kept them in Unity in the Body; and having alſo loſt and laid by their ſubjection to them that were over them in the Lord, they then grew Stubborn and Wilful, and procceded in more Zeal for that which ſtood in Oppoſition to the Truth, than ever they did for the Truth it ſelf; and theſe ſometimes have prevailed to the Subverting whole Houſholds, and have turned ſeveral from the Faith and Simplicity that is in the Goſpel, who, as well as thoſe that Subverted them, have loſt the Fellowſhip of the

Saints,

Saints, and the Savour of Life, either in themſelves or others, and then the Enemy perſuaded them, all are Dead to the Life but themſelves; and ſo they grow to have a tickling Joy in what they do and ſay, in obedience to that perverſe and ſingular private Spirit, and ſo grow up to ſpeak Evil of Dignities, and are untruly, and dare to ſpeak againſt Heaven, and them that Dwell and Inhabit in it, whom God makes to ſhine as Stars in the Firmament of his Power; but alas for them! my Soul Pities them, when I ſee how they ſport themſelves with their own Deceivings; but the Day of the Lord is among his People, which hath and doth make them and their Spirit manifeſt, and their Fruits alſo have made them manifeſt.

Another Way that the Enemy ſeeks to break the Unity, and diſſolve the Bond of Amity, is, by Sowing a Seed of Jealouſie and Prejudice in the Hearts of ſuch in whom he can get an Entrance; that ſo they may ceaſe from the true and unfeigned Love, and that upon a pretended Reaſon, becauſe of this or that, which is ſuppoſed or imagined, in the Evil Parts in themſelves, againſt others; giving heed to Evil Thoughts or Surmiſes, which break forth many times in Whiſperings and Tale-bearing; which tho' the thing ſuppoſed to be Evil, were really ſo; yet this is not to be allow-

allowed or given way to among you, but to uſe plainneſs one towards another, and ſingle-heartedneſs; and to ſhut out the Evil One in this his ſubtil Appearance alſo. Oh Dear Friends! Remember how the Lord hath dealt with you, and deal you ſo one by another; he hath not ſought Occaſions againſt you, but hath long born and ſuffered, and exerciſed much Patience and Tenderneſs towards you; yet plainly Reproving the Evil in you, and not Treaſuring it up againſt you. Oh Friends! be like-minded one towards another, that the Enemy of your Peace and Concord may be defeated, and you preſerved entire to one Head, even to Chriſt Jeſus; and ye may be one, and the Name of the Lord may be one among you; and that which tends to the making cold your Love, may be Judged in all; and ſo Brotherly-Love will continue with you to the End.

Another way which the Enemy works to ſcatter, and to bring from this Unity, is, by leading ſome, who have Believed, into ſome Sin and Iniquity, which the Body (that are in the Truth) are conſtrained to appear in Judgment againſt for the Truth's ſake; and yet notwithſtanding the Party ſo Sinning, being above the witneſs in themſelves, which would bring them to own the Judgment of the Spirit of Chriſt in his Church, they exal

them

themſelves above the Judgment and ſeek to gain to them ſuch whom they can enter by their Words and Complaints, to take part with them againſt the Judgment, and thoſe that paſſed it. Such were thoſe whoſe Words *did Eat* (the Apoſtle ſaid) *as a Canker*, of whom the Believers in thoſe Days were to be aware; for commonly ſuch as have gone from the Power, that ſhould have kept them Clean and Upright, they will alſo turn againſt the Power in thoſe that abide in it, eſpecially if they be drawn forth to Reprove and Rebuke them: But let all ſuch know, that's not the way to be Renewed; and let all that take part with any that work Iniquity, know, that they do but defile their own Souls thereby, and do but rend themſelves from that Body which they cannot Proſper out of. And therefore, Dear Friends, beware of joyning with that, in your ſelves or in others, which the Power goeth againſt, let the Pretences be what they will; for that which doth Evil, will always be apteſt to ſow Evil Complainings of others; and ſuch as are in the unſatisfied Murmuring againſt Judgment paſſed upon them, are much to be fear'd; for they thereby render themſelves to be the more Guilty, and yet the further from Repentance. But, Dear Friends, watch unto that which gives you a living feeling of the living Body,

which is the Church, that in all things you may demean your ſelves as true Members of it, ſerving one another in Love, and ſubmitting your ſelves one unto another for the Lord's ſake: That in all Plainneſs and Singleneſs, as becometh the Truth, you may ſeek to preſerve the Unity which the Enemy of Truth and Peace doth Envy; ſo ſhall ye continue to ſtrengthen one anothers hand in every good Work, and this ſhall tend to the weakening of the Hands of your Enemies, who ſeek to divide you, that they might Rule over you. Many other Deſigns doth the wicked one try, daily to break and divide, more than can now be named or here inſerted; but they are all out of the Light, and if you be in it, you will ſee them, and that will preſerve you; for it is one, and did make us one, and will keep us to be of one Heart and Mind to the End, if we abide in it.

3. The Third good Effect which Truth did work in the beginning, in them who did truly receive it, was *Zeal* and *Faithfulneſs* to God, in the bearing Teſtimony to what was manifeſt, tho' through great Sufferings; in which, as Friends abide in the Root, they do daily encreaſe in Power, to fulfil the ſame Teſtimony: for the Mercy of the Lord doth engage them, and his Anſwer of Peace in the midſt of their Tryals, doth Arm them, and Encourage them,

and

and they do hold out to the end; and for ſuch the Lord hath always made a way, better than they could have made for themſelves. Yet the Enemy hath in this matter alſo been very buſie, and hath prevailed with ſome under divers Conſiderations, or rather Conſultations, which he hath propounded unto them. But, Oh Friends, be ye all watchful, and take heed leſt any of the Teſtimonies of Truth be laid waſt; for that which leads to be weary of bearing Witneſs to the Truth, and to lay it Waſte, the ſame will lay thee Waſte, and bring thee into ſuch a State, as thou wilt want the Truth to bear witneſs for thee; and tho' it be hard for Fleſh and Blood (which hath no Kingdom but here) to fall into the hands of Unreaſonable Men, yet it is a more fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God; and therefore, let all Lukewarm ones, who are neither Hot nor Cold, be now awakened, and all that have gone Backwards be Warned to *return to their Firſt-Love, elſe the Lord will come againſt them, and the Day haſtens that will divide ſuch their Portion among Hypocrites, except they Repent.*

But to touch at ſome of the Reaſons or Arguments, which he that abode not in the Truth himſelf, uſeth to draw others into this kind of Treacherous Backſliding.

Firſt, He Appears to ſome to Perſuade them, That their former Teſtimony was born

more from an imitation of others, than from a work of the Power of God in themſelves; and that now, they not finding the Thing required of them, they may leave off their Teſtimonies, or may do ſuch things as they have denied formerly; this Snare doth the Enemy make uſe of in theſe Days. But mark who it is that he hath caught with it; none but ſuch who ſometimes were low in their Minds, and dare not grieve the Spirit of God in themſelves, nor others, but for the Truth's ſake could give up all things, rather than their Teſtimony; but in time growing Careleſs and Looſe in Waiting, loſt that ſubject State, and grew High and Exalted in their Minds above the Croſs that ſhould have Crucified the betraying Wiſdom; and ſo having loſt the true Exerciſe of the Power, and the feeling of the Excellency and Worth of the Truth, they knew not the Requirings of the Lord; and the Earthly Mind got up, that placed a greater Eſteem upon Earthly Things, than upon Things that are Eternal; and ſo things that once thou offeredſt up to God, thou takeſt again into thine own Hand, and ſo Robbeſt the Lord, and groweſt Careful about Outward Things, as other *Gentiles* are; and to cover thy Shame therein, the Enemy then Tempts thee to bely the Power that once wrote in thy Heart, and made thee afraid to Act againſt

againſt the Light, or to deny the Teſtimony for God in ſuch things as was manifeſt, and then ſay'ſt, thou didſt it by imitation; but thou ſhalt know thy Covering is too Narrow in the Day that haſteth upon thee.

Another Temptation that the Enemy preſenteth, is, That tho' thou art Convinced what to do, or what thou ſhouldeſt deny, yet the Tryals are ſo hard and ſo many, and Perſecutors wax worſe and worſe, ſo that thou ſhalt not hold out to the End; and where he can get Entrance with this Bait, he preſently cauſeth an Evil Heart of Unbelief and Doubting to ariſe, which takes away even the Strength which the Lord did give, and ſo Feebleneſs doth enter the Mind, and a Spirit of Bondage leads thee to Fear again; and then comes the Diſpute in thy Heart, whether thou ſhalt Stand with the Power of God, in the Obedience, or whether thou ſhalt Fall under that Power that ariſeth againſt God, and his Truth and People? And in this Combate thou haſt a Subtil Enemy, uſing many Devices to Betray thee, and a part in thy ſelf, not yet Mortified, that is ready to ſay, *Pitty thy Self, Pitty thy Wife, Pitty thy Children, and Pitty thy Relations*; which it may be ſometimes, are all as ſo many Inſtruments of Satan to Seduce thee, and lead thee into Darkneſs, that thou may'ſt not ſee ſo great neceſſity in thy bearing up thy

Teſtimony as indeed there is, nor ſo great a Danger in the contrary as indeed there is.

Oh Friends! at ſuch a time as this, where is there any help but in the Lord? Where canſt thou find a Saviour, but in that Light which gives to diſtinguiſh of the ſeveral Voices? Now it is good for thee to Remember, that *If thou walkeſt after the Fleſh, thou muſt and ſhalt ſurely Die and Wither.* In ſuch a time Flee, Flee to the Lord, wait in his Dread to feel thy Strength but Renewed at the Preſent, and take no care for Strength next *Month*, next *Year*, or next *Tryal*, for *God is God, and changeth not, and will be the ſame to thee in Seven-Tryals as in Six, if thou Believe and Wait on him in uprightneſs*; and therefore fear not Man, but truſt in the Lord, all ye that have known and felt his Power, and let not in the Enemy of your Souls by the Door of *Carnal Reaſoning*, but keep that ſhut; and rather conſider, how the Enemy makes thee as a rejoycing among his own Children, and Strengthens that Hope in them, of their overcoming all others, as well as thee; which Hope is Curſt, and ſhall be Confounded: And conſider, that if thou letteſt Fall thy Teſtimony, which thou haſt once born for the Lord, thou makeſt the Heart of the Righteous ſad, and makeſt their Travail through that Teſtimony the harder for them, by reaſon of thy Encouraging

raging their Adverſaries by the Hope aforeſaid. And whatever thou doſt, *They muſt go thorow to the End, who will Inherit the Crown of Immortality.*

And again conſider, It may be that thy Backſliding, or Cowardly drawing away the Shoulder, may prove a Diſcouragement to others, and they may Stumble in thy Stumbling, and Fall with thee, and never be able to Riſe, and ſo thou bring their Blood alſo upon thee. Oh! Remember alſo that Servant of the Lord, who could ſay, *Pſalm* 119. 157. *My Perſecutors are encreaſed, but my Heart doth not Decline thy Teſtimonies.* That was a noble Spirit becoming the Soldiers of Chriſt; yea, *though Perſecuted by Princes,* as he ſaith, *Verſe* 161.

Dear Friends, Let your Minds be ſtirred up to be Zealous for the Lord, in this the great Day of Controverſie with Darkneſs and its Power. Who hath God to bear Witneſs to his Name, but you? Among whom hath he made it known as among you? Who have given up themſelves to the Lord as you have done? Well, *Bleſſed are they that keep Covenant with the Lord, for they ſhall ſee his Glory.*

One more ſubtile Snare of the Enemy in this matter is in my Heart to mention, that is this, *viz.* To Perſuade thee for once, ſometimes to do that which the Light hath made Manifeſt, with a purpoſe afterwards to be more

Faithful. Oh Friends! In the Name and Fear of the Lord, I Exhort and Warn you all to take heed of this, for this will prove but a falſe Confidence, thou wilt find this kind of going out of the Guidance of Truth, to be a dear Out-going to thee; for if ever thou doſt return, it will be very hardly, and with bitter Anguiſh of Soul. Oh! do not Tempt the Lord on this wiſe, *leſt it do prove impoſſible upon thy Sinning willingly to Renew or Reſtore thee again by Repentance*; thou wilt have thy *Pottage*, but wilt *loſe the Bleſſing*, *though thou may ſeek it with thy Tears*; for while thou *menteſt out*, *behold*, *thy Way became Hedged up*, and the *Thorny Nature* got up in thee, and ſo thou art *Debarred* and *Fenced out* from Enjoying thy former State; Sin being entred, Death ſoon follows. Oh! Remember *Sampſon*, who when he had diſcloſed the Token of a *Nazarite*, in which State he ſtood in Covenant with God; yet thought to have ſhaken himſelf, and to have gone forth in his Strength, as at other times, but was miſtaken, *Judges* 16. 20. *For the Lord was departed from him, though he knew it not.* And ſo, tho' thou haſt known the Lord's Preſence and Power in thy Veſſel, yet take heed of letting in that Treacherous Spirit, to lead thee to Unfaithfulneſs, and to betray the leaſt of his Truſts and Teſtimonies committed to thee, tho' it be but for once; for thereby

by thou wilt render thy ſelf unworthy to be found a Witneſs of his Power another time; for the Lord will leave that Veſſel, and often doth, and chuſeth other Veſſels to manifeſt himſelf in, that will be more True and Faithful.

So, Dear Friends, in true and tender Love I have laid theſe things before you, that ye might all be ſtirred up and provoked to Love, and to good Works, that ye might abound in the Grace committed to you; and none of you who have known the Truth, might be entangled with the Wiles of your ſubtil Enemy, and that you that have begun well, might not loſe the things that ye have wrought, but might perſevere in Well-doing till ye have finiſhed your Courſe in Peace. And Friends, this is the Joy and Delight of thoſe that Labour among you in the Lord, and hereby is our Hand Strengthned, and our Hearts Refreſhed, when we do find ye ſuch as we deſire ye ſhould be, even ſtedfaſt in the Truth; and then alſo do you find us to you-ward, ſuch as ye deſire we ſhould be, even a Refreſhing in the Fellowſhip of Life unto you, and our God Comforts us together, in the mutual Joy and Comfort of his Holy Spirit, working in us, and you.

And Friends, I am the more drawn forth at this time to viſit you with an Epiſtle, becauſe the Lord hath given me ſome ſight of his great

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and dreadful Day, and Workings in it, which is at hand, and greatly haſtens, of which I have ſomething to ſay unto you, that ye may be prepared to ſtand in his Day, and may behold his wondrous Working among his Enemies, and have Fellowſhip with his Power therein, and may not be diſmayed nor driven away in the Tempeſt, which will be great.

And as concerning thoſe ſucceeding Times, the Spirit of the Lord hath ſignified, that they will be Times of Horror and Amazement, to all that have, and yet do Reject his Counſel: For as the Days of his Forbearance, Warning and Inviting, hath been long, ſo ſhall his Appearance amongſt thoſe that have withſtood him, be Fierce and Terrible; even ſo Terrible, as who ſhall abide his Coming? For the Lord will Work both Secretly and Openly, and his Arm ſhall be manifeſt to his Children in both.

Secretly he ſhall raiſe up a continual Fretting Anguiſh amongſt his Enemies, one againſt another, ſo that being Vexed and Tormented Inwardly, they ſhall ſeek to make each other Miſerable, and delight therein for a little Seaſon; and then the Prevailer muſt be Prevailed over, and the Digger of the Pit muſt Fall therein; and the Confidence that Men have had one in another ſhall Fail, and they will Beguile and Betray one another, both by Counſel

Counſel and Strength; and as they have banded themſelves to break you, whom God hath Gathered, ſo ſhall they band themſelves one againſt another, to Break, to Spoil and Deſtroy one another; and thorow the Multitude of their Treacheries, all Credit or Belief, upon the account of their ſolemn Engagement, ſhall Fail; ſo that few Men ſhall count themſelves, or what is theirs, ſafe in the Hand of his Friend, who hath not choſen his Safety and Friendſhip in the pure Light of the unchangeable Truth of God; and all the ſecret Counſels of the Ungodly ſhall be brought to nought, ſometimes by the means of ſome of themſelves, and ſometimes by Impoſſibilities lying in their Way, which ſhall make their Hearts fail of ever accompliſhing what they have determined; and in this State ſhall Men fret themſelves for a Seaſon, and ſhall not be able to ſee the Hand that turns againſt them, but ſhall turn to Fight againſt one thing, and another, and a third thing, and ſhall Stagger, and Reel in Counſel and Judgment, as Drunken Men that know not where to find the way to Reſt; and when they do yet ſtir themſelves up againſt the Holy People, and againſt the Holy Covenant of Light, and them that walk in it, they ſhall but the more be Confounded; for they ſhall be helped with a little help, which all the Un-

Ungodly ſhall not hinder them of, to wit, the ſecret Arm of the Lord, maintaining their Cauſe, and Raiſing up a Witneſs in *Iſa.* 8. the very Hearts of their Adverſaries to plead their Innocency, and this ſhall make them yet the more to vex themſelves, and to go thorow hard-beſtead; for when they ſhall look upward to their Religion, to their Power, Policy, or Preferments, or Friendſhips, or whatſoever elſe they had truſted in, and relied upon, they ſhall have cauſe to Curſe it; and when they look downwards to the Effects produced by all thoſe things, behold, then Trouble, and Horror, and Vexation takes hold on them, and drives them to Darkneſs; and having no help but what is Earthly, and being out of the knowledge of the mighty overturning Power of the Lord God Almighty, they ſhall Deſpair and wear out their Days with Anguiſh; and beſides all this, the terrible Hand of the Lord is, and ſhall be openly manifeſted againſt this Ungodly Generation, by bringing grievous and terrible Judgments and Plagues upon them, tumbling down all things in which their Pride and Glory ſtood, and overturning, overturning, even the Foundations of their Strength; yea, the Lord will lay waſte the Mountain of the Ungodly, and the Strength of the Fenced City ſhall Fail, and when

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Men ſhall ſay, *We will take Refuge in them,* *Nahum* 3. 12, 13. they ſhall become but a Snare, and there ſhall the Sword Devour: And when they ſhall ſay, *We will go into the Field, and put truſt in the Number and Courage of our Soldiers*, they ſhall both be taken away; and this Evil alſo will come of the Lord, and his Hand will be Stretched out ſtill, and ſhall bring Confuſion, Ruin upon Ruin, and War upon War; and the Hearts of Men ſhall be ſtirred in them, and the Nations ſhall be as Waters, into which a Tempeſt, a ſwift Whirl-wind is entred, and even as Waves ſwell up to the diſſolution one of another, and breaking one of another, ſo ſhall the ſwellings of People be: And becauſe of the Hardſhip and Sorrow of thoſe Days, many ſhall ſeek and deſire Death rather than Life.

Ah! My Heart relents, and is moved within me in the ſenſe of theſe things, and much more than I can Write or Declare, which the Lord will do in the Earth, and will alſo make haſte to accompliſh among the Sons of Men, that they may know and confeſs, *That the Moſt High doth Rule in the Kingdoms of Men, and pulleth down and ſetteth up according to his own Will: And this ſhall Men do before ſeven times paſs over them, and ſhall be content to give their Glory unto him that ſits in Heaven.*

But, Oh Friends! while all theſe things

are working, and bringing to paſs, repoſe ye your ſelves in the Munition of that Rock that all theſe ſhakings ſhall not move, even in the knowledge and feeling of the Eternal Power of God, keeping you ſubjectly given up to his Heavenly Will, and feel it Daily to Kill and Mortifie that which remains in any of you, which is of this World; for the Worldly part in any, is the changeable part, and that is up and down, full and empty, joyful and Sorrowful, as things go well or ill in the World: For as the Truth is but one, and many are made partakers of its Spirit; ſo the World is but one, and many are partakers of the Spirit of it; and ſo many as do partake of it, ſo many will be ſtraitned and perplexed with it; but they who are ſingle to the Truth, waiting Daily to feel the Life and Vertue of it in their Hearts, theſe ſhall rejoyce in the midſt of Adverſity; theſe ſhall not have their Hearts moved with Fear, nor toſſed with Anguiſh becauſe of Evil Tydings, *Pſalm* 112. 7, 8. Becauſe that which fixeth them remains with them: Theſe ſhall know their entrance with the Bridegroom, and ſo be kept from Sorrow, tho' his coming be with a noiſe; and when a midnight is come upon Man's Glory, yet they being ready and prepared, it will be well with them, and having a true ſenſe of the Power working in themſelves, they cannot but have Unity and

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Fellowſhip of it in the Earth, and will not at all Murmur againſt what is, nor wiſh nor will what is not to be; theſe will be at reſt till the Indignation paſſeth over, and theſe having no Deſign to carry on, nor no Party to promote in the Earth, cannot poſſibly be defeated nor diſappointed in their undertakings.

And when you ſee Diviſions, and Parties, and Rendings in the Bowels of Nations, and Rumours and Tempeſts in the Minds of People, then take heed of being moved to this Party or to that Party, or giving your Strength to this or that, or councelling this way or that way; but ſtand ſingle to the Truth of God, in which neither War, Rent nor Diviſion is; and take heed of that part in any of you, which truſts and relies upon any ſort of the Men of this World, in the Day of their Proſperity; for the ſame Party will bring you to ſuffer with them in the time of their Adverſity, which will not be long after; for ſtability in that Ground there will be none; But when they ſhall ſay, *Come joyn with us in this or that*, remember you are joyned to the Lord by his pure Spirit, to walk with him in Peace and in Righteouſneſs, and you feeling this, this gathers out of all Buſlings, and Noiſes, and Parties, and Tumults, and leads you to exalt the Standard of Truth and Righteouſneſs, in an Innocent Converſation, to

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ſee who will flow unto that; and this ſhall be a Refuge for many of the Weary, Toſſed and Afflicted ones in thoſe Days, and a Shelter for many whoſe Day is not yet over.

So dearly Beloved Friends and Brethren, who have believed and known the bleſſed Appearance of the Truth, let not your Hearts be troubled at none of theſe things: Oh! let not the things that are at preſent, nor things that are yet to come, move you from Stedfaſtneſs, but rather Double your Diligence, Zeal and Faithfulneſs to the Cauſe of God: For they that know the Work wrought in themſelves, they ſhall Reſt in the Day, of Trouble, *Yea, though the Fig-Tree fail, and the Vine brings not forth, and the Labour of the Olive-Tree ceaſeth, and the Fields yield no Meat, and the Sheep be cut off from the Fold, and there be no Bullocks in the Stall, yet then mayeſt thou Rejoyce in the Lord, and Sing Praiſes to the God of thy Salvation.*

Hab. 3. 16, 17.

And how near theſe Days are to this Poor Nation, few know, and therefore the Cry of the Lord is very Loud unto its Inhabitants, through his Servants and Meſſengers, that they would Prize their Time while they have it, leſt they be Overturned, Waſted and laid Deſolate before they are aware; and before Deſtruction come upon them, and there be no

no Remedy, as it hath already done upon many.

Oh LONDON! LONDON! That thou and thy Rulers would have conſidered, and hearkned and heard, in the Day of thy Warnings and Invitations, and not have perſiſted in thy Rebellion, till the the Lord was moved againſt thee, to cut off the Thouſands and Multitudes from thy Streets, and the preſſing Throngings of People from thy Gates, and then to Deſtroy and Ruin thy Streets alſo, and lay Deſolate thy Gates, when thou thoughteſt to have repleniſhed them again.

And, Oh! ſaith my Soul, that thy Inhabitants would yet be Warned, and Perſuaded to Repent and Turn to the Lord, by putting away every one the Evil that is in their Hearts, againſt the Truth in your ſelves, and againſt thoſe that walk in it, before a greater Deſolation and Deſtruction overtake you.

Oh! what ſhall I ſay to prevail with *London*, and with its Inhabitants! The Lord hath Called aloud, he hath Roared out of *Sion* unto them, but many of them have not hearkned at all, nor conſidered at all.

Well, Oh my Friends! (and thou Oh my Soul!) return to your Reſt, dwell in the Pavillion of the Houſe of your God, and my God, and ſhelter your ſelves under the ſhadow of his Wings, where ye ſhall be Wit-

neſſes of his Doings, and ſee his STRANGE ACT brought to paſs, and ſhall not be hurt therewith, nor diſmayed.

Oh my Friends! in the Bowels of dear and tender Love have I ſignified theſe things unto you, that ye might ſtand Armed with the whole Armour of God, Cloathed in Righteouſneſs, and your Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Goſpel of Peace; and freely given up in all things to the diſpoſing of the Lord, who will Deliver us, not by Might, nor by Sword, nor Spear, but by his own Eternal Inviſible Arm, will he yet Save us and Deliver us, and get himſelf a Name by Preſerving of us: and we ſhall yet Live to Praiſe him who is worthy of Glory, of Honour and Renown, from the Riſing of the Sun to the Setting of the ſame, now and for Ever, *Amen, Amen*, ſaith my Soul.

A POSTSCRIPT.

Dear Friends and Brethren,

I Have ſomething farther in my Heart to communicate unto you, in dear and tender Love, and in deſire of your Preſervation out of the Snare of your Adverſary; And that is, To Exhort you all to dwell in the pure

pure Judgment of the Truth, which is a Defence upon your Glory; and let none bereave you of this, under any pretence whatſoever; but as you come to a true feeling of the Life in your ſelves, to which alone the certain Judgment appertaineth, ſo let this Life have freedom, and ſtop it not from the Judging all that which is at Enmity with the Life, and tends to the hurting of the true Plant of God; for I have ſeen a Harm hath come to many who have parted with their Judgment, and ſo have become Unarmed, and the Enemy hath prevailed upon them, (under a pretended Tenderneſs) to permit or ſuffer ſuch things as were hurtful to themſelves and others; and though the Lord hath given them Judgment and diſcerning in the Matter, yet were bereaved of that Gift, and ſo by little and little became Beguiled.

Oh dear Friends! Conſider theſe Days are Perilous Times, and it is needful for every one, to watch in that ſame Eternal Light to which you were firſt turned, that by his Righteous Judgment ye may be Preſerved from every thing in your ſelves that appears contrary to that precious Life of which you have taſted: And when you have ſo done, then to take heed, that the Enemy do not do that by an Inſtrument which (through your watchfulneſs in the Light) he could not do without;

nd all beware of that affected Tenderneſs that cries out, *Be tender to all, and Pray for all, and mind the Good in all, and Love all, and Judge none, but leave Judgment to God*, &c. I ſay, Heed not the plauſible words of that Spirit which being Guilty, to ſave its own Head from a Stroke, would bereave you of your Judgment, which God hath given you; and is indeed truly his Judgment, and is to be Adminiſtred in his Wiſdom and Power, for the cleanſing and keeping clean his Sanctuary; for ſuch as have no Judgment in their goings, are they that know not the true way of Peace, but make them crooked Paths, *He that goeth in them ſhall not know Peace*, Iſai. 59. 8.

But ſome may ſay, *Was not Chriſt Meek and Lowly? and ought not all to be like unto him?*

'Tis true, my Friends; but there is a difference between the Seed's Suffering, and its Reigning, and there are times for them both: And when it doth pleaſe God to permit the Hour and Power of Darkneſs in the open Perſecutors, to exalt it ſelf againſt his Seed and People, by Perſecution and ſuch like; they are led by his Spirit to appear in Meekneſs and Quietneſs, as a Sheep before the Shearer. But what is this to ſuffering Bad and Perverſe Spirits, that appear under pretence of the Truth, and yet are out of the Truth, and

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Enemies to its Proſperity, ſtriving to exalt and ſet up another thing inſtead of the Truth? Such as theſe the Lord doth not require you to uſe only Patience and Meekneſs towards; but if that will not Reclaim them, they muſt know the Judgment of the Truth, and you in it muſt ſtand over them; for in this caſe the Day of the Exaltation of Chriſt is come, and God is crowning Truth with Dominion over every Falſe Spirit, and Corrupt Practice thereof.

And therefore, dear Friends, Eye the Lord in his goings forth, and as you feel his Life in you to witneſs againſt any Evil and Corrupt Thing or Practice, uſe Plainneſs, and keep Sincerity, and turn not Judgment backwards; for that which is unwilling to be Judged, and cries out, *Judge none, leave all to God*, &c. The ſame will take upon it both to Judge and Rule, but not in the Wiſdom of God; and thoſe that cry out ſo much for Tenderneſs, and againſt Truth's Judgment, the ſame are moſt dangerous to be drawn out from the Patient Suffering in the Spirit of Chriſt Jeſus, when they ought to appear in the moſt Meekneſs, and to appear Rough and Wrathful in the Striving and Fighting Nature, and are moſt apt to be tempted into a Spirit of Revenge, as hath been ſeen by ſad Experience, for they that loſe the Exerciſe of that by which all

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should keep Dominion over Deceit, they lose that Strength by which they should be enabled to suffer all things for the sake of Christ Jesus.

So, Dear Friends, in that which keeps out the Defiler and the Betrayer, all wait upon the Lord, that you may have your Armour on, and be Fortified with the Strength, with the Might, and with the Judgments of God, and keep that under in every place, which under Pretence of Tenderness and Forbearance would make Void the Testimony of Truth, or make the offence of the Cross to cease in any thing wherein you have been Instructed from the Beginning, that the Lord may behold and see Judgment Established, and be Pleased, *Isaiah* 59. *The Lord looked, and there was no Judgment, and it displeased him*; for thereby Deceit got up, with which it is to be kept down.

So the Lord God of Power and Wisdom preserve you Faithful, and fitted for every good Word and Work; the Strong to watch over the Weak in Singleness; and the Weak to be subject to the Strong in the Lord, that so the pure Plant of Righteousness and Truth may grow in and among you all, to his Praise that hath called you; To whom be Glory and Honour for Ever, Amen.

G. S. C.

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